

Assembly Bill No. 2559

CHAPTER 91

An act to amend Sections 191.5, 192, 192.5, 193, and 193.5 of the Penal Code, relating to vehicles.

[Approved by Governor July 20, 2006. Filed with
Secretary of State July 20, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2559, Benoit. Vehicles: driving under the influence: manslaughter.

Existing law defines as one type of vehicular manslaughter, the unlawful killing of a human being while driving a vehicle in violation of specified driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI) provisions and in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to a felony, but without gross negligence. Existing law defines as another type of vehicular manslaughter, the unlawful killing of a human being while driving a vehicle in violation of those specified DUI provisions and in the commission of a lawful act that might produce death, in an unlawful manner, but without gross negligence.

This bill would require the killing to be the proximate result of the commission of the unlawful act or the proximate result of the commission of the lawful act.

This bill would also reorganize the provisions relating to vehicular manslaughter, including provisions relating to manslaughter involving vessels and specified water devices.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 191.5 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

191.5. (a) Gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated is the unlawful killing of a human being without malice aforethought, in the driving of a vehicle, where the driving was in violation of Section 23140, 23152, or 23153 of the Vehicle Code, and the killing was either the proximate result of the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to a felony, and with gross negligence, or the proximate result of the commission of a lawful act that might produce death, in an unlawful manner, and with gross negligence.

(b) Vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated is the unlawful killing of a human being without malice aforethought, in the driving of a vehicle, where the driving was in violation of Section 23140, 23152, or 23153 of the Vehicle Code, and the killing was either the proximate result of the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to a felony, but without

gross negligence, or the proximate result of the commission of a lawful act that might produce death, in an unlawful manner, but without gross negligence.

(c) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (d), gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated in violation of subdivision (a) is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for 4, 6, or 10 years.

(2) Vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated in violation of subdivision (b) is punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for not more than one year or by imprisonment in the state prison for 16 months or 2 or 4 years.

(d) A person convicted of violating subdivision (a) who has one or more prior convictions of this section or of paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 192, subdivision (a) or (b) of Section 192.5 of this code, or of violating Section 23152 punishable under Sections 23540, 23542, 23546, 23548, 23550, or 23552 of, or convicted of Section 23153 of, the Vehicle Code, shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for a term of 15 years to life. Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 2930) of Chapter 7 of Title 1 of Part 3 shall apply to reduce the term imposed pursuant to this subdivision.

(e) This section shall not be construed as prohibiting or precluding a charge of murder under Section 188 upon facts exhibiting wantonness and a conscious disregard for life to support a finding of implied malice, or upon facts showing malice consistent with the holding of the California Supreme Court in *People v. Watson*, 30 Cal. 3d 290.

(f) This section shall not be construed as making any homicide in the driving of a vehicle or the operation of a vessel punishable which is not a proximate result of the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to felony, or of the commission of a lawful act which might produce death, in an unlawful manner.

(g) For the penalties in subdivision (d) to apply, the existence of any fact required under subdivision (d) shall be alleged in the information or indictment and either admitted by the defendant in open court or found to be true by the trier of fact.

SEC. 2. Section 192 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

192. Manslaughter is the unlawful killing of a human being without malice. It is of three kinds:

(a) Voluntary—upon a sudden quarrel or heat of passion.

(b) Involuntary—in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to felony; or in the commission of a lawful act which might produce death, in an unlawful manner, or without due caution and circumspection. This subdivision shall not apply to acts committed in the driving of a vehicle.

(c) Vehicular—

(1) Except as provided in subdivision (a) of Section 191.5, driving a vehicle in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to felony, and with gross negligence; or driving a vehicle in the commission of a lawful act which might produce death, in an unlawful manner, and with gross negligence.

(2) Driving a vehicle in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to felony, but without gross negligence; or driving a vehicle in the commission of a lawful act which might produce death, in an unlawful manner, but without gross negligence.

(3) Driving a vehicle in connection with a violation of paragraph (3) of subdivision (a) of Section 550, where the vehicular collision or vehicular accident was knowingly caused for financial gain and proximately resulted in the death of any person. This provision shall not be construed to prevent prosecution of a defendant for the crime of murder.

This section shall not be construed as making any homicide in the driving of a vehicle punishable that is not a proximate result of the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to felony, or of the commission of a lawful act which might produce death, in an unlawful manner.

“Gross negligence,” as used in this section, shall not be construed as prohibiting or precluding a charge of murder under Section 188 upon facts exhibiting wantonness and a conscious disregard for life to support a finding of implied malice, or upon facts showing malice, consistent with the holding of the California Supreme Court in *People v. Watson*, 30 Cal. 3d 290.

SEC. 3. Section 192.5 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

192.5. Vehicular manslaughter pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 191.5 and subdivision (c) of Section 192 is the unlawful killing of a human being without malice aforethought, and includes:

(a) Operating a vessel in violation of subdivision (b), (c), (d), (e), or (f) of Section 655 of the Harbors and Navigation Code, and in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to felony, and with gross negligence; or operating a vessel in violation of subdivision (b), (c), (d), (e), or (f) of Section 655 of the Harbors and Navigation Code, and in the commission of a lawful act that might produce death, in an unlawful manner, and with gross negligence.

(b) Operating a vessel in violation of subdivision (b), (c), (d), (e), or (f) of Section 655 of the Harbors and Navigation Code, and in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to felony, but without gross negligence; or operating a vessel in violation of subdivision (b), (c), (d), (e), or (f) of Section 655 of the Harbors and Navigation Code, and in the commission of a lawful act that might produce death, in an unlawful manner, but without gross negligence.

(c) Operating a vessel in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to a felony, and with gross negligence; or operating a vessel in the commission of a lawful act that might produce death, in an unlawful manner, and with gross negligence.

(d) Operating a vessel in the commission of an unlawful act, not amounting to a felony, but without gross negligence; or operating a vessel in the commission of a lawful act that might produce death, in an unlawful manner, but without gross negligence.

SEC. 4. Section 193 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

193. (a) Voluntary manslaughter is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for 3, 6, or 11 years.

(b) Involuntary manslaughter is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or four years.

(c) Vehicular manslaughter is punishable as follows:

(1) A violation of paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 192 is punishable either by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than one year or by imprisonment in the state prison for two, four, or six years.

(2) A violation of paragraph (2) of subdivision (c) of Section 192 is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than one year.

(3) A violation of paragraph (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 192 is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for 4, 6, or 10 years.

SEC. 5. Section 193.5 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

193.5. Manslaughter committed during the operation of a vessel is punishable as follows:

(a) A violation of subdivision (a) of Section 192.5 is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for 4, 6, or ten years.

(b) A violation of subdivision (b) of Section 192.5 is punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for not more than one year or by imprisonment in the state prison for 16 months or 2 or 4 years.

(c) A violation of subdivision (c) of Section 192.5 is punishable either by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than one year or by imprisonment in the state prison for two, four, or six years.

(d) A violation of subdivision (d) of Section 192.5 is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than one year.